



Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

Mortimer, Gary & Chell, Kathleen (2013) What's in it for me? Virtual conspicuous donation strategies as a source of value in blood donation. In *World Social Marketing Conference 2013*, 21-23 April 2013, Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto, Canada. (Unpublished)

This file was downloaded from: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/64637/>

© Copyright 2013 The Author(s)

Notice: *Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source:*

Kathleen Chell

Queensland University of Technology

Dr Gary Mortimer

Queensland University of Technology

Ph +61 7 3138 6611

Email: kathleen.chell@connect.qut.edu.au

Title: What's in it for me? Virtual conspicuous donation strategies as a source of value in blood donation

Subject Area: Blood donation, social media

Paper Type: Working Paper

Kathleen Chell is an Honours Student.

Abstract

Providing an incentive is becoming common practice among blood service organisations. Driven by self-orientated motives rather than pure philanthropic intentions, research is showing that people increasingly want something in return for their support. It is contended that individuals donate conspicuously with the hope it will improve their social standing. Yet there is limited evidence for the effectiveness of conspicuous recognition strategies, and no studies, to the researcher's knowledge, that have examined conspicuous donation strategies in an online social media context. There is a need to understand what value drives individuals to donate blood, and whether conspicuous donation strategies are a source of such value post blood donation. The purpose of this paper is to conceptualise how conspicuous donation strategies, in the form of virtual badges on social media sites, can be applied to the social behaviour of blood donation, as a value-adding tool, to encourage repeat behaviour.

Introduction

Understanding motivations behind individual involvement in pro-social activities, such as donating to non-profit organisations, has been of great interest among academic researchers and policy-makers owing to their importance in the adoption and continued participation in desired social behaviours (Bennett, 2003; Pentecost & Andrews, 2009). Yet, despite substantive research in this area, supply remains below societal needs for many donation activities (Charities Aid Foundation, 2011). This is particularly evident in blood donation. In Australia blood donations have plateaued, with only 3% of the eligible population donating blood despite continued communication efforts about shortages (Blood Service, 2012).

Previous literature investigating donor motivations strongly support the view that blood donation is distinctively an altruistic act (Alessandrini, 2007; Steele et al., 2008), and that altruism is the primary reason for donating blood (Nelson & Grenne, 2010). This is reflected in the heavy tendency for blood organisations worldwide to use education based promotions that appeal to an individual's altruistic nature. As donation rates have failed to increase, promotional appeals to

altruism are seemingly not sufficient to achieve behaviour change. Researchers have questioned the role of altruism in the decision to donate blood and suggest that such behaviour is also partly motivated by some form of self-interest, such as social or emotional benefits (Harbaugh, 1998; Bennett, 2003). Of importance in this conceptual paper is the notion of conspicuous donation behaviour as a means to provide social or emotional benefits. It is argued individuals tend to act out of self-interest, which is why it is necessary to provide a value proposition that highlights immediate benefits to encourage individuals to donate. Accordingly, there is a need to determine what value donors seek and how it can be enhanced in a more conspicuous way to encourage blood donation behaviours. To this end, the paper conceptualises a relationship between customer value and conspicuous donation in the context of blood donation behaviour.

Customer Value

The significance of customer value in the social marketing discipline is evident by the very role of social marketing, which makes reference to creating, communicating and delivering value to the target audience (French & Blair-Stevens, 2006). Customer value can help understand what consumers want out of an exchange to encourage behaviour and has been shown to influence behavioural intentions (Gipp, Kalafatis, & Ledden, 2008). When considering customer value in a blood donation context, an economic approach provides a limited view, and as such, there has since been a shift towards an experiential approach to understanding perceived customer value, particularly in the social marketing discipline (Russell-Bennett, Previte, & Zainuddin, 2009).

Based on the work of Holbrook (2006), customer value is conceptualised as consisting of four dimensions; functional, social, emotional and altruistic. Such dimensions have been adapted to suit a social marketing context where there is no economic exchange (Russell-Bennett, et al., 2009). Post-donation, functional value relates to the health benefits received from donating blood, whilst altruistic value is derived from knowing the behaviour is helping others. Research has demonstrated that individuals often experience a direct, psychological benefit as a consequence of moral satisfaction induced by the contribution to the common good (Ferguson, Atsma, de Kort, &

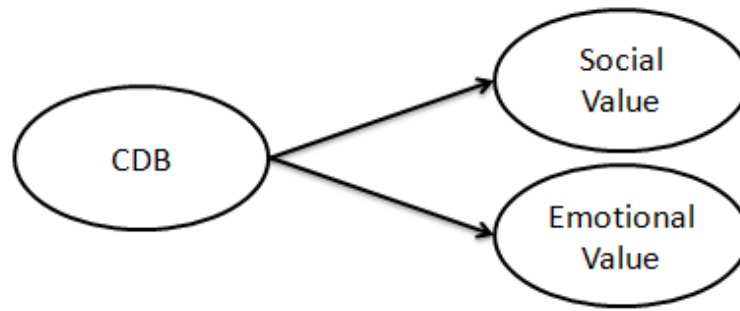
Veldhuizen, 2012). In this paper, this is conceptualised as emotional value, for example, feelings of increased self-worth or personal fulfilment from donating blood. Social value is derived from the behaviour's ability to enhance social status, to make a good impression and shape the opinion of others. People driven by social value tend to choose products or perform behaviours that convey an image congruent with the social image they want to project (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991).

Conspicuous Donation Behaviour

Individuals desire to be perceived in a positive way, and a non-profit organisation may be a vehicle for expressing such an identity. To accommodate this need for recognition, many non-profit organisations, have developed strategies that allow individuals to donate in very visible ways. Encapsulating this trend, the term 'conspicuous donation behaviour' (CDB) was coined and defined as *"the act of donating to charitable causes via the visible display of charitable merchandise or the public recognition of the donation"* (Grace & Griffin, 2009). Whilst novel in its application to helping behaviours, it is well established that consumption of goods and services often holds symbolic meanings beyond utilitarian purposes (Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012). Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption promotes the visible consumption of goods as a mechanism to improve one's social positioning and identity, while conspicuous donation promotes the visible display of charitable donation to achieve the same end (Grace & Griffin, 2009). CDB can be both self-orientated and other-orientated, thus consumers interested in communicating and enhancing their social status and social identity, might equally be preoccupied with their inner 'self-concept' and so perform particular conspicuous consumption behaviours to communicate with themselves as much as with other people. On this basis, it could be expected that individuals may perform conspicuous donation behaviours to seek both personal fulfilment (emotional value) and social recognition (social value) from donating blood. On this basis, the following proposition is made and depicted in Figure 1.

P1: Provision of conspicuous rewards will provide individuals with social and emotional value. Individuals who seek social and emotional value from donating blood will react positively when provided with a means in which to publicly display their charitable contribution.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Social Media

The majority of CDB takes place offline in the form of displaying charitable merchandise (Grace & Griffin, 2006). As online social networking behaviours increase, marketers are increasingly searching for new ways to employ social media to engage their target audience (Hoffman & Novak, 2012). Social media platforms give consumers the opportunity for self-presentation without the limitations associated with material possessions (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Given that conspicuousness is characterised by visibility, and that social media can be used to provide visibility in terms of consumption, the following proposition is made.

P2: CDB can be manifested through the use of social networking platforms.

Age

Although young adults represent the largest proportion of new and current blood donors in Australia, this group has the lowest retention rate, which is problematic as this group is essential to the maintenance of an adequate donor base in the future (Blood Service, 2012). Glynn et al. (2003) and Sanchez et al. (2001) emphasise that younger blood donors are significantly more likely than older donors to be encouraged to donate blood if offered tangible conspicuous rewards. This suggests that offering conspicuous incentives may be an important strategy to attract and retain young blood donors. On this basis, the following proposition is made.

P3: Younger donors will have a more positive reaction towards receipt of a conspicuous donation reward on social media.

Conclusion

While selfless altruism should always be important in blood donation, other motives, such as personal benefit (through receiving goods and rewards), signalling effects, psychological and emotional benefits, should be recognised. Moreover, such value propositions could be targeted by a wide variety of appeals, including the use of virtual conspicuous rewards. The relative lack of literature on the effectiveness of conspicuous donation strategies makes an examination of virtual conspicuous rewards as a source of value in pro-social activities, such as donating blood, particularly insightful in the light of social media platforms' growing popularity for self-expression.

References

- Alessandrini, M. (2007). Community volunteerism and blood donation: altruism as a lifestyle choice. *Transfusion Medicine Reviews*, 21(4), 307-316.
- Bennett, R. (2003). Factors underlying the inclination to donate to particular types of charity. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 8(1), 12-29.
- Blood Service. (2012). *National Donor Profile: Reporting Period Jan 2011 to Jan 2012*: Australian Red Cross Blood Service.
- Charities Aid Foundation. (2011). *World giving index 2011*: Charities Aid Foundation.
- Ferguson, E., Atsma, F., de Kort, W., & Veldhuizen, I. (2012). Exploring the pattern of blood donor beliefs in first-time, novice, and experienced donors: Differentiating reluctant altruism, pure altruism, impure altruism, and warm glow. *Transfusion*, 52(2), 343-355.
- French, J., & Blair-Stevens, C. (2006). *Social marketing: National benchmark criteria*. UK: National Social Marketing Centre.
- Gipp, N., Kalafatis, S. P., & Ledden, L. (2008). Perceived value of corporate donations: An empirical investigation. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 13(4), 327-346.
- Grace, D., & Griffin, D. (2006). Exploring conspicuousness in the context of donation behaviour. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 11(2), 147-154.
- Grace, D., & Griffin, D. (2009). Conspicuous donation behaviour: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8(1), 14-25.
- Harbaugh, W. (1998). What do donations buy? A model of philanthropy based on prestige and warm glow. *Journal of Public Economics*, 67(2), 269 - 284.
- Holbrook, M. (2006). Consumption experience, customer value, and subjective personal introspection: an illustrative photographic essay. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(6), 714-725.
- Nelson, P., & Grenne, K. (2010). *Signalling goodness: Social rules and public choice*. Ann Arbor, USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Patsiaouras, G., & Fitchett, J. (2012). The evolution of conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 4(1), 154-176.
- Pentecost, R., & Andrews, L. (2009). Differences between students and non-students' willingness to donate to a charitable organisation. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 15(2), 122-136.
- Russell-Bennett, R., Previte, J., & Zainuddin, N. (2009). Conceptualising value creation for social change management. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 17(4), 211-218.
- Schau, H., & Gilly, M. (2003). We are what we post? Self-presentation in personal web space. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 385-404.
- Sheth, J., Newman, B., & Gross, B. (1991). Why we buy what we buy: A theory of consumption values. *Journal of Business Research*, 22(2), 159-170.
- Steele, W., Schreiber, G., Guiltinan, A., Nass, C., Glynn, S., Wright, D., et al. (2008). The role of altruistic behaviour, empathetic concern, and social responsibility motivation in blood donation behaviour. *Transfusion*, 48(1), 43-54.